Foster Carers’ Charter

Children come first

The aim of Credo Care is to provide a multi-disciplinary foster care option for children and young people with complex needs. We specialise in providing planned placements for children as an alternative to residential or hospital care. The children may have learning difficulties, physical disabilities, communication or medical needs or may be on the Autistic Spectrum.

Credo Care aims to provide this high quality fostering service by ensuring that:

- All adults who work for the agency demonstrate a positive model for communicating effectively with the children and young people placed in their care.
- Each child or young person is provided with an experienced, skilled and trained carer(s), who are committed to meeting the needs of the children and young people placed in their families.
- Each child and young person is provided with more than sufficient opportunities to achieve personal integration into their communities.
- Each child and young person is provided with an appropriately matched, stable, caring and nurturing family.
- Every child, whatever their background or circumstances, receives the support they need to achieve the five outcomes: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic well-being.

The fostering service pledge

1. Working in Partnership

The fostering service will ensure it meets the standards set out in the fostering regulations and guidance. The fostering service will demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct. The service will ensure safeguarding is paramount in its care.

We will:
- Value your skills and expertise equally to those of other professionals.
- Recognise that you are the people who live with the children day to day and therefore know them best.
- Include you in all meetings that affect you and the children you care for.
- Ensure the fostering service will not be used as a substitute for fostering support.
- Treat you without discrimination and respect you as a professional.
- Respect confidentiality.

2. Information

The fostering service will provide foster carers with all information about a child that is provided to them. Both the carers and the fostering service will endeavour to continue to provide information about the child for the duration of the care and pathway plans. All involved in the care of the child will remain fully informed about the child’s needs and support requirements.

Supervisory social workers will incorporate feedback from the supervisory reports and the child’s diary into the child’s progress reports for the local authority, evidencing better outcomes for children.

We will:
- Provide this information in writing prior to placement, or as soon as possible in the case of emergency placements.
- Provide a detailed placement plan drawn up with you in advance of placement, or as soon as possible in the case of emergency placements.
- Provide you with information on all financial matters including tax, allowances and additional support for the child.
- Provide you with full details of all relevant departmental policies and procedures.

3. Clarity about Decisions

The fostering services will involve foster carers and their children in planning and decision making, ensuring that the particular needs of children with disabilities and/or complex needs will be fully understood and taken into account.

We will:
- Ensure that you can make informed decisions that meet your foster child is not treated differently to their peers and the general public.
- Provide clarity about any decision you cannot take at the forefront so that everyone understands who is responsible for what decision.

4. Support

The fostering service will provide clear information about the support offered both during and at the ending of the placement. We will ensure that you and your family have access to the child’s welfare, safety and needs are at the forefront of their care.

Foster carers will be supported in making agreements with the local authority social worker regarding delegated authority. The importance of the child’s relationship with their foster family will be recognised as one that can make the biggest difference to the child’s life, and which can be sustained into adulthood.

Foster carers will be treated as core members of the team around the child and will be supported in making reasonable and appropriate decisions.

A 24-hour emergency telephone number for advice and guidance will be provided.

We will:
- Provide you with monthly supervision and weekly phone contact.
- Ensure honest and open feedback.
- Ensure that there is a local group, recognised by the fostering service, where you and your family can find support and share experiences with other fostering families.

5. Continuous Learning and Development

Foster carers will have a personal development plan. The fostering service will provide you and your family with support and training based on individual need. All foster carers will be expected to complete the core training modules and update their core training as required. Advanced training will be available as the service develops its training programme.

We will:
- Assist you to develop meaningful relationships with the children in your care and the fellow members of the team around the child.
- Provide you with monitoring/training or support.

6. Communication and Consultation

The fostering service recognizes that good communication and consultation is essential to ensure positive outcomes for children. We will work with the placing authority in regard to the writing of a full and informative placement plan aligning as much as possible in advance of the placement. Children’s wishes and feelings will be central to our reporting and to contributions at LA reviews. Outcomes for children will be discussed in supervising social workers’ meetings. Foster carers will have access to all policies and procedures, either by hard copy or on our internal server.

The Foster Carers’ Handbook will be updated regularly.

The service will facilitate and encourage foster carers to run their own support groups and develop peer networking, which will be facilitated by the service. Managers will attend if requested. Managers will meet with individual carers to discuss matters specific to that carer or their placements as and when required.

We will:
- Develop regular communication between you, carers and the Director of Children’s Services.
- Ensure that you can use your information in a meaningful way to meet their needs.
- Give you timely feedback from consultations.

7. Fair Treatment

The service will ensure that foster carers are treated fairly no matter what the circumstances. The service will provide a framework for dealing with disputes against foster carers. Foster carers’ revisions will be made available to the subject in order to ensure openness and accuracy. Complaints will be received and responded to in a fair and objective manner.

The service will provide individual foster carers with a Foster Carers’ Agreement that provides specific details regarding remuneration. A detailed breakdown of allowances will be provided, with guidance on auditing.

The service will consult with foster carers before making changes to the terms and conditions. The fostering service will pay allowances and expenses in a timely manner.

We will:
- Ensure equality in the way discussions and communications work.
- Ensure that you are treated with respect, kept informed and provided with emotional support should you object to an allocation.

The fostering carers’ pledge

1. Information

We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship.

We will:
- Respect confidentiality and maintain a daily diary, detailing the face-to-face information relating to the child/young person in care.
- Inform/advise the child/social worker as soon as possible, in regard to any significant incidents and events affecting the child.
- Inform our supervising social worker of significant events, changes in our family life or in our household.
- Inform our supervising social worker about any difficulties that arise for us.

2. Respect for the Child

We believe that every child and young person should be respected an individual and supported in meeting their needs, achieving their aspirations and potential.

We will:
- Respect and promote a child’s religious, linguistic and cultural heritage.
- Ensure the safety, care and protection of the child/young person.
- Provide stability and the opportunity for the child to grow, develop and reach their potential.
- Ensure that the child/young person has the right to make decisions regarding their life, in accord with their cognitive age and understanding.
- Develop a meaningful relationship with the child: understand their needs, support their growth, and become an advocate and protector for the child.
- Afford the same level of protection and care to a child as we would our own child in accordance with the materialising standards.
- Ensure that child has the right to make decisions regarding their own affairs, as appropriate to their age and understanding.

3. Learning and Development

We will cross learning and development opportunities throughout our fostering career. This will ensure we have the skills and knowledge we need to meet the individual needs of the child or children placed with us, and allow us to develop our professional capacity in a way that we can help transform the lives of the children we foster.

We will:
- Be prepared to develop our skills throughout our fostering career.
- Take up opportunities offered to us and let you know if we are unable to attend.
- Attend or participate in any training and relevant training relating to the child’s characteristics and individual needs.
- Contribute to ongoing support and training.
- Share our knowledge and expertise with other carers within Credo Care, on both formal and informal basis.

We will:
- Encourage and support you to develop your skills throughout your fostering career.
- Encourage and support our carers to develop their skills.
- Support you to develop your skills throughout your fostering career.
- Encourage and support our carers to develop their skills.
- Support you to develop your skills throughout your fostering career.

5. Communication and Consultation

We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship.

We will:
- Respond to consultations with Credo Care and be open to learning about the short and long term aims of the organisation.
- Demonstrate our expertise and make use of our skills to the best of our ability.
- Provide children with a positive experience of family life.
- Attend meetings about the children and young people we care for.
- Share a willingness to work with both parents, wider family and other people significant in a child’s life.
- Meet the standards set in the fostering regulations and guidance and follow departmental policies and procedures.

The Credo Care Foster Carers’ Charter has been developed and compiled jointly by the fostering service and its foster carers, with additional input from staff and support workers.